

THE STORIES OF THE OLD MINERS OF MURÇÓS (TERRAS DE CAVALEIROS GEOPARK, PORTUGAL)

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The Terras de Cavaleiros Geopark (TCG) is located in the Trás-os-Montes region in northern Portugal and corresponds to the administrative area of Macedo de Cavaleiros, which has about 700 km² and a population of 15,776 inhabitants.

The main attraction in the TCG is a set of geosites that document an important phase in the history of Planet Earth, a time when the continents of Gondwana and Laurussia, formerly divided by the ocean Rheic, collided and formed the great Variscan mountain range. These geosites are concentrated in the eastern part of the TCG, whereas other parts in the geopark's territory comprise different values. That is the case for the village of Murçós, with 134 inhabitants, which was the centre of intense exploration of tungsten and tin until the 1970s with its peak during World War II. The hydrothermal W>Sn quartz veins cut Silurian schists and a Variscan biotite granite, the mineralization of stockwork type. The exploitation of scheelite and cassiterite took place mainly at the surface in six open pits. The W>Sn quartz veins contain scheelite, cassiterite, wolframite, many sulphides and sulphosalts, native bismuth and rare particles of gold.

A great part of the local population was involved in the mining activities, which therefore were of big relevance to them. In order to preserve the memories of the people who worked in the Mining Complex of Murçós a project was initiated which aims to contribute to the revitalization of this village. The project includes guided visits and the realization of a documentary based on the experiences of the ex-miners. This documentary aims to preserve and disseminate an intangible heritage that is disappearing, a village on the edge of depopulation.

The project started in March 2014 with a research for photos and documents in official entities, followed by an awareness-raising action with the inhabitants of Murçós that resulted in 10 people willing to participate in interviews. At the moment these interviews are being transcribed in order to make a script for the documentary, which will address both the experiences of former miners and the surrounding history of mineral extraction in the village of Murçós.

The activities carried out so far showed positive effects such as an increased self-esteem among the local population and a stronger connection between the people and TCG. Hence the TCG aims to realize similar projects in other villages in the future, to further develop the potential of the Geopark.